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Weak Crossover: Quantificationality or Indefiniteness

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So-called weak crossover phenomena, which are exemplified by (1a-b), have usually been accounted for by attributing the ungrammaticality to the quantifierhood of the relevant elements, who and everyone; (the traces of) these quantifiers do not c-command the coindexed pronouns at the relevant level, resulting in the violation of the structural condition that is generally posed on quantifier-bound variables.

- (1) a. *Who_i does his_i mother love t ?
b. *His_i mother loves everyone_i.

If the relevant elements are replaced by non-quantifiers, i.e., referential expressions like Bill/the man, the sentence becomes acceptable.

- (2) His_i mother loves Bill_i/the man_i.

Thus most previous analyses are based on the view that the crucial line dividing the grammaticality of the weak crossover structure is drawn between quantifiers and non-quantifiers.

In this talk, however, I have advanced some counterarguments to that traditional view and proposed an alternative analysis based on the distinction between definites and indefinites.

One of the counterarguments is from the behavior of indefinite NPs like a boy. In recent research such indefinite expressions are regarded as non-quantifiers at least in one use of them; Fodor and Sag (1982) make an argument that indefinites have a referential as well as a quantificational use, and Heim (1982) presents an analysis in which indefinites are treated like variables rather than quantifiers. Thus an indefinite NP like a boy is expected not to express a weak crossover effect at least in its referential use. This expectation is contrary to the fact, however, as seen in (3).

- (3) a. *His_i mother admired a boy_i.

- b. *That he_1 might be sent to the front doesn't bother a good soldier₁. (Hornstein 1984)

A second counterargument is that there is no appropriate account of the contrast in acceptability between he and they in (4), a fact pointed out by Contreras 1986. (Note that only an assumption that every has a referential as well as a quantificational use does not serve the purpose.)

- (4) That * $he_1/they_1$ might be sent to the front bothers everybody₁.

A central idea of my proposal is as follows: a first assumption is that pronouns in general cannot take elements to their right, quantificational or referential, as their antecedents (unless the former is c-commanded by the latter). In all the sentences of (1)-(4), then, the pronouns, which are leftmost relevant NPs, have no sentence-internal antecedents. On the other hand, those pronouns can take antecedents beyond the sentences, i.e., from prior discourse or utterance situation, as with other usual pronouns. This latter choice, however, produces ungrammaticality in (3a-b) in which the pronouns are coindexed with indefinite NPs. This is due to the Novelty Condition as Heim (1982) defines: An indefinite NP must not have the same referential index as any NP to its left. For example, in (5) the latter indefinite NP cannot take the former as its antecedent.

- (5) He likes a cat₁, but she hates *a cat₁/the cat₁.

Even if his/he in (3) has an antecedent in prior discourse, the antecedent cannot be coindexed with the indefinite a boy/a good soldier because of the Novelty Condition, and thus his/he cannot have the same index as a boy/a good soldier, hence the ungrammaticality of (3). Bill/the man in (2), on the other hand, can be coindexed with his through the mediation of a certain prior antecedent, because the Novelty Condition does not apply to definite NPs, as is obvious from (5). Thus the grammaticality of (2). The ungrammaticality of he and the grammaticality of they in (4) might come from the selection of intersentential pronouns with respect to every-N.

- (6) Everyone₁ came to the party, and * $he_1/they_1$ had a marvelous time.